



United States
Office of Personnel Management

FWS Job Grading Standard for Instrument Maker

3314

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**Workforce Compensation and Performance Service
Classification Programs Division
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WORK COVERED

This standard is used to grade all nonsupervisory jobs involved in planning and fabricating complex research and prototype instruments that are made from a variety of materials and are used to detect, measure, record, and regulate heat, pressure, speed, vibration, sound, illumination, biomedical phenomena, and other areas of interest to scientific, engineering, or medical personnel.

TITLES

Jobs graded by this standard are to be titled *Instrument Maker*.

GRADE LEVELS

This standard describes two levels at which jobs might be established. If jobs differ substantially from the skill, knowledge, and other work requirements described in the grade levels of the standard, they may warrant grading below those grades.

NOTES TO USERS

During the factfinding study for this occupation, certain characteristics were found to be consistent even though agency and installation grading practices differed considerably. These characteristics form the framework of the job grading standard. They are emphasized in this section to assist in identifying the occupation in contrast to other, similar work, and are intended to reinforce the information in the factors as described in the body of the standard.

Most instrument makers were found to be working in organizational units that provided service to research and development activities. Some jobs were found in other shops (for example, machine shops and woodworking shops) that primarily service other functional areas such as manufacturing or maintenance. The jobs in the instrument shops were usually identified as instrument makers at a variety of levels of the Federal Wage System (FWS) grade structure. Jobs in other shops were usually identified as premium jobs in a single trade (for example, Machinist, WG-12 or 13). While both of these arrangements may be satisfactory for grade level purposes, comparisons are provided to assist in distinguishing the characteristics between the instrument maker jobs in other occupations of the FWS.

Jobs that substantially match the characteristics in column A, below, are instrument makers regardless of the organizational location of the position.

Jobs that substantially match the characteristics in column B, below, are more appropriately considered as premium jobs in a specific trade regardless of their organizational location. These jobs are to be classified by closely comparing them with the grade levels described in the appropriate job grading standard to determine whether they match or exceed the skill and knowledge outlined in the standard and by interpolation between these standards and the one for

the instrument maker. These jobs are to be titled to the occupation that includes the single trade work processes.

A**INSTRUMENT MAKER**

1. The work processes used to make the items require the skill make the item require skill and knowledge of more than one specific trade; for example, the worker uses work processes of (a) machining, welding, and metal surface treating; or (b) metal working and electronics. While the worker does not need the skill to perform all the work processes in the broad trade areas, he must have sufficient knowledge of them to establish the requirements for other tradesmen to follow and to accept or reject their work.
2. The project requires considerable initiative and imagination in extending and modifying trade work processes and improvising with them in various combinations to manufacture unique items.
3. Assignments are usually on a project-to-project basis although the workers occasionally may be called on to assist on another project because they possesses expertise in a specific specialty.
4. After original assignment by the supervisor, employees work with engineering, professional, or technical personnel professional, for the duration of the project. They consult with their supervisor on principally the most complex trade problems and for administrative purposes.

B**PREMIUM JOURNEYMAN**

1. The work processes used to and knowledge of a single trade; for example, machinist, toolmaker or sheet metal workers. The workers have the skill to perform all the work processes. On large, multipart projects, they may assign work to other workers in their trade, check their plans, and provide technical advice and assistance on the work processes.
2. The project requires a very high degree of ability in the particular trade to work to critical exactness and precise tolerances. Trade processes are used to the fullest extent or extended beyond that normally expected of a journeyman.
3. Assignments are varied. Because they require the use of the fullest extent of the trade work processes, assignments on some projects may be shared with other trade specialists.
4. Although work orders are usually initiated by engineering, professional, or technical personnel, work processes are usually approved by the supervisor, especially when trade techniques deviate from normal trade practices.

INSTRUMENT MAKER

5. The worker is assigned to and is responsible for the end item; the complete instrument or a complex component of the instrument.
6. When the assignment is to make an instrument component, the component is either a complete item that can operate as a separate unit and is as complex as complete instruments normally assigned to the shop, or the planning and making of it requires a knowledge of the purpose and use of the instrument in which the component is a critical item.

PREMIUM JOURNEYMAN

5. Although the worker may work closely with the work-order initiator, completed items are usually approved by a supervisor or an inspector before release.
6. When the assignment is to make an instrument component, the component is usually recognized as an integral part that must fit precisely but does not usually require the knowledge of the purpose and use of the complete instrument.

3314-14**Instrument Maker, Grade 14****3314-14**

General: WG-14 Instrument Makers plan, lay out, fabricate, and modify a variety of one-time research and development devices, specialized laboratory equipment, and precise instruments which are used to detect, measure, record, and regulate such features as heat, pressure, speed, vibration, sound, illumination, biomedical conditions, or similar other areas of interest to research project personnel. The instruments that the WG-14 Instrument Makers plan and fabricate are nonrepetitive or one-of-a-kind in nature. They are associated with a single broad trade category such as mechanical, or photo optics, or electronics; require skill and knowledge in a broad occupational category such as electronics, or metalworking, or wood and plastic working; require precision fits and tolerances, and possess interrelated dimensions, various angles and planes and unusual contours and shapes, or complex and non-standard circuitry with a wide variety of electronic components.

WG-14 Instrument Makers independently plan, lay out, construct, test, and assemble the complete instrument and has the full technical and mechanical responsibility for the work plan and all work processes whether they personally perform them or are assisted by other craft persons for particularly demanding or specialized work. Assignments are received from, and completed work is reviewed by, a supervisor as unusual problems arise; through periodic progress reports from the employee, and through discussions with project engineers, medical doctors, or other scientific and professional personnel.

Another example of work at the WG-14 level is an assignment to plan and construct a complete instrument from electronic and electric components, units, and assemblies. For example, WG-14 Instrument Makers specializing in this kind of work, devise and construct complex circuitry based on the determination of cable and wave guide size, insulation, fuse requirements, and other similar needs. They plan, lay out, and select the number, type, and placement of elements such as relays, solenoids, transformers, condensers, tubes, transistors, switches, inductors, and motors. They determine the number and type of components needed to produce the required carrying capacity, torque, power, and other characteristics of the instrument. They assemble units such as indicators, meters, counters, transmitters, receivers, amplifiers, pattern recording equipment, and servomechanisms. They make all connections and complete the model by soldering, riveting, screwing, bolting, or by other similar fastenings. When the components, units, and assemblies are not available from sources of supply, WG-14 Instrument Makers fabricate or adapt them from other available material. They check the operation of the instrument using various measuring devices such as oscilloscopes, bridges, capacitance checkers, analyzers, signal generators, wave inductors, and various types of meters. They also check the operation of the associated mechanical elements or structural features of the completed instrument to insure that it meets all the requirements as established by the work-order initiator.

Most of the instruments WG-14 Instrument Makers fashion require that they be familiar with the latest production processes to select, cut, fit, and achieve trueness, and to fasten a variety

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of materials together with allowances for desired movements, bending, expanding, contracting, or oscillating according to design and operational requirements.

Skill and Knowledge: WG-14 Instrument Makers apply a knowledge of a variety of manufacturing processes and methods during the planning stage of a project in order to discuss the general idea of a desired item with the work-order initiator (medical doctor, scientist, or engineer). They know how to calculate loads, sizes, dimensional fits, and weights using shop algebraic and trigonometric formulas, and tables. They recommend alternative methods when design characteristics cannot be met by proposed fabrication processes. For example, they suggest changes because of unsuitable or unavailable material's, impractical component placement or alignment, or unrealistic fabrication requirements in the initial design. They consider such factors as shrinkage, warpage, desired life, location of component members, surface finish, atmospheric, oceanographic, medical, or biological environment, pressure, heat, stresses, and strain. From the nature of the intended use of the instrument, they must be able to determine what materials and work methods to use and the operational and fabrication process to follow.

WG-14 Instrument Makers know how to plan and lay out complete instruments, assemblies, and subassemblies, to reproduce scale designs, and to plan work sequences so that other employees assigned to make parts of the product can easily follow instructions. They use skill and a broad knowledge of related and allied trades. For example, they may be skilled in setting up and operating a variety of metalworking machines or woodworking and plastic-working machines and apparatus to make items with hard to define reference points and three-dimensional configurations.

WG-14 Instrument Makers must know how to develop and fabricate special tools, fixtures, and jigs to hold, machine, fabricate, and assemble items with compound curves and intersecting compound angles. In addition, they must be skilled in using a variety of precise measuring devices such as supermicrometers and shadowgraphs and a variety of specialized tools and equipment such as electrical discharge machines, jewelers lathes, microsoldering and welding equipment, or oscilloscopes, bridges, capacitance checkers, analyzers, signal generators, wave indicators, and various other similar types of meters.

Responsibility: The supervisor, doctor, or designer makes general assignments without detailed instructions. WG-14 Instrument Makers receive work orders and instructions in terms of the intended use, operational characteristics, approximate configuration, size, weight, dimensions, tolerances, and the number and kind of assemblies and subassemblies. The guidelines provided consist mainly of drawings, photographs, sketches, and oral information related to basic design data without specific details of component placement and relationships, sizes, fits, shapes, or materials (such specific details are developed during the fabrication processes). The researcher depends on the originality and ingenuity of the employees for the

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solution of fabrication, assembly, installation, and related problems. There are few guidelines or precedents and WG-14 Instrument Makers exercise considerable judgment in selecting or rejecting materials, work processes, and fabrication techniques.

WG-14 Instrument Makers personally perform all the fabrication and assembly operations, or they personally perform the most complex work and assumes the responsibility for the complete assignment by guiding and coordinating the effort of other workers on large and multipart instruments. They consult with the supervisor principally on problems such as obtaining required equipment, materials, and manpower. The supervisor reviews the work on only the most complex, technical problems and through discussions with technical and professional personnel with whom the instrument makers are working.

Physical Effort: WG-14 Instrument Makers frequently handles objects weighing up to 5 kilograms (10 pounds), and occasionally, at various stages of some assignments, they may assemble heavy items up to 18 kilograms (50 pounds) without the assistance of lifting devices. The work involves standing, walking, stooping, bending, kneeling, climbing up and down ladders, and scaffolding, and pulling and pushing.

Working Conditions: WG-14 Instrument Makers frequently work inside and occasionally in outside areas. They are exposed to the possibility of cuts, bruises, scrapes, burns, or broken bones, and may be exposed to fumes, radiation, or unstable biological conditions. The tasks may involve discomfort while wearing helmets, aprons, gloves, safety glasses, hard hats, and other protective equipment as required by changing assignments.

3314-15**Instrument Maker, Grade 15****3314-15**

General: WG-15 Instrument Maker plan, lay out, modify, and fabricate instruments which are more complex than those described at the WG-14 level. In contrast to the WG-14 Instrument Makers who make devices that require skill and knowledge in a single, broad occupational area, WG-15 Instrument Makers use skill and knowledge of a combination of occupational areas such as electromechanical, or photo-optics combined with pneumatics and hydraulics. WG-15 Instrument Makers are responsible for all the planning and manufacturing processes whether they personally perform them or are assisted by other craft persons. Responsibility for all of the planning and manufacturing processes is also typical of the WG-14 level but because the requirement to use skill and knowledge of a wider variety and greater number of work processes, WG-15 Instrument Makers encounter and solve more problems that require them to make additional judgments and decisions.

Skill and Knowledge: WG-15 Instrument Makers must know how to plan and lay out unique and novel instruments and to perform, or direct the fabrication processes for the complete instrument. The instruments they make represent a broad knowledge of several occupational categories and a variety of design characteristics. For example, based on a thorough knowledge of their characteristics, WG-15 Instrument Makers develop the circuitry and determine the need for a variety of electrical and electronic components. After personally fabricating the metal components, they assemble, arrange, mount, wire the components, accomplish precision fitting, and align and test the complete assembly. Given the same assignment, other WG-15 Instrument Makers would plan and fabricate the electrical and electronic components and plan and direct the fabrication of the metal components. In either example, WG-15 Instrument Makers are responsible for all components of the complete electromechanical instrument, its accuracy, and operating quality.

Other typical instruments that are assigned to WG-15 Instrument Makers require skill in working materials such as steel, aluminum, copper, fiberglass, plastics, ceramics, rubber, fiber phenolics, and in addition, soldering and welding, cable splicing, harnessing, isolation and miniaturization techniques. As another example, the kinds of instruments assigned to WG-15 Instrument Makers require the understanding of optical system design and its related mechanical design principles for holding and moving optical components without deformation or misalignment and the ability to manufacture, fit, and align all components by machining and assembling components of the complete instrument to extremely close fits and tolerances.

WG-15 Instrument Makers are skilled in the operation of more of a variety of tools and equipment than WG-14 Instrument Makers because they use skills in broader occupational areas. For example, they plan and make special jigs, fixtures, and tools to assist in the machining processes and, on the same project, they use a variety of electronic equipment such as volt-ohm meters, frequency meters, audio-oscillators, autocollimators, alignment telescopes, and other similar equipment for testing components of the more complicated instruments. The knowledge of shop mathematics that WG-15 Instrument Makers use is more extensive than that used by

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WG-14 Instrument Makers because the design characteristics of the instruments to be manufactured present problems in unrelated trade areas. For example, an instrument with electromechanical features requires the calculation of various angles and planes and unusual contours and shapes to plan and lay out the mechanical components and, in addition, the calculation of load, resistance, capacitance voltage, and other electronic mathematical problems.

Responsibility: The supervisor makes general assignments without detailed instruction on projects typically associated with the development of unique and complex research instruments which are without precedent or closely related work. Guidelines provided consist mainly of oral information related to basic instrument requirements and environmental conditions.

WG-15 Instrument Makers make unreviewed trade judgments and decisions on how the instrument will be fabricated, including determinations of precise specifications required to achieve the final operating characteristics requested by scientists and engineers. Both researchers and the supervisor depend on the broad experience, originality, and ingenuity of WG-15 Instrument Makers for the solution of fabrication, practical design, assembly, and installation problems. WG-15 Instrument Makers may consult with professional instrumentation engineers, and electronic specialists on unusually complex and difficult problems which cannot be solved through practical design or fabrication techniques. The supervisor reviews work through periodic progress reports from the instrument makers and through discussions with technical and professional personnel with whom the instrument makers are working.

The work at the WG-15 level is more responsible than at the WG-14 level because the more complicated instruments require more judgments and decisions concerning a greater variety of alternative methods, materials, and work sequences, and planning, assembling, and testing techniques.

Physical Effort: Physical effort at this grade-level is the same as that described at the [WG-14 level](#).

Working Conditions: Working conditions at this grade-level are the same as those described at the [WG-14 level](#).